

Now I know that this objection is somewhat awkward because it does not have the apparent support of the candidate involved, but I believe it is our duty and responsibility to assure that election results meet the spirit and the letter of our Constitution and that we instill confidence in the process by demonstrating that voting schemes and irregularities are not ignored.

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, although I will not file an objection to the counting of Ohio's electoral votes, I rise today to acknowledge the voting discrepancies and irregularities that occurred in the State of Ohio in this past presidential election.

As is evident in my colleague JOHN CONYERS's voting rights status report, Ohio has failed to provide the opportunity for its citizens to have equal access and opportunity to cast their vote and have that vote accurately counted.

Many voters were denied provisional ballots and some eligible voters were improperly purged. Others were given erroneous information as to where and when they could vote. The State provided insufficient resources to minority precincts, resulting in long lines that caused delays up to 10 hours, forcing some voters to have to leave those lines to tend to personal obligations.

There were rampant incidents of voter intimidation, deceptive phone calls and fraudulent fliers on official looking letterhead.

The lack of a verifiable paper trail by some of the electronic voting machines contributed to a questionable vote count.

Clearly, Ohio's election officials, including Secretary of State Blackwell, have questions to answer regarding these disturbing irregularities.

How can we encourage free and fair elections in Iraq, a country that may soon become a fledgling democracy, when we can't ensure free and fair elections in America after 200 years of democracy.

As a Member of Congress it is my duty to uphold the right of the people to have free and fair elections of their government officials. It is my hope that this Congress will work together in the coming months to enact real election reform that will restore America's confidence in the electoral process.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative TUBBS JONES and Senator BOXER and Representative JOHN CONYERS for forcing this institution, and thus our Nation, to debate the quality of our democratic voting process and to consider whether it meets the expectations of its people.

If we are to form a more perfect union, we must dedicate ourselves to forming a more perfect voting process.

Four years ago, this Nation shuddered at the weakness of our ballot process, and vowed to improve it.

But in some respects, it was weakened further.

The ballot was weakened when votes were allowed to be cast without a printed record.

The ballot was weakened when the vote took so long that voters had to choose between voting and missing a day's work.

The ballot was weakened when provisional ballots were not honored.

We must confront the fact that electronic voting machines that do not provide a "print out" are a black hole.

We can do better. Our ATM machines give receipts in return for cash. It is clearly not a

technological barrier to provide a receipt in return for a vote.

This is America. We are the incubator for democratic evolution. We are a beacon to the free world. Ohio had special problems this time, but they are problems we can fix, and when we fix them in Ohio, we will have made the progress in 2005 that we failed to make over the last 4 years.

I am voting to support this challenge to the certification of Ohio's vote as a legitimate and constructive beginning to a more perfect democracy and a more perfect union.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, this debate is not frivolous. This is not about sour grapes. This is not about conspiracy theories. This is about the central act of democracy.

Here in the House of Representatives all members have been elected. Some of us have been elected in recounts.

What are recounts? They are independent checks of the tally.

Reliable knowledge is verifiable knowledge. As my colleagues know, I am a scientist. It is a principle of scientific thinking that one person's claim must be subject to independent confirmation or correction.

I agree with Senator JOHN KERRY. We should today award Ohio's electoral votes to President Bush. I believe President Bush got more votes in Ohio than did Senator KERRY. I believe it. I cannot confirm it. No one can confirm it.

Consider electronic voting machines. If there was an error between the voter casting the vote on the touch screen and the recording of an electronic signal in a memory bank, no one will ever know. It might be a software error; it would not necessarily be a malicious conspiracy. But if the vote is recorded incorrectly, no one will ever know.

I ask my colleagues, can anyone say he or she knows that the actual vote is what has been presented to us? The answer is no. None of us can say this knowledge has been independently verified. It is not reliable knowledge unless it is verified knowledge. This is not a philosophical fine point. Americans don't want to and should not have to take the results simply on faith. The electronic machines used in Ohio and most other States are not designed to be verifiable. Recounts are meaningless.

Self-government works only if we believe it does. A loss of confidence in our system is fatal to a democratic republic such as ours. That confidence has been eroded over the years and has taken some body blows in recent years.

We need a major effort to shore up our democracy.

Americans are a trusting people, but we demand evidence. We demand verification.

We are also a pragmatic people, and so we in the House will not upset the apple cart today. Without doubt we will endorse the electoral votes presented to us today. But we should not be satisfied. Republicans should not be satisfied. Democrats should not be satisfied. The reason is not that President Bush got more votes. The reason is that the knowledge of President Bush's majority is unreliable knowledge.

Anything of value should be auditable. Votes are valuable. Each voter should have the knowledge that the vote is recorded as intended. We are talking today about the heart of our democratic republic.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, not with the hope of overturning an election, but with the hope of overturning a system that has for too long failed to guarantee every American their most basic right, the right to vote.

Our very democracy was founded on the essential right of citizens to have a voice in their government. As Members of Congress we are sworn to uphold the Constitution of the United States, which includes the 13th and 19th Amendments, and I am quite frankly saddened that such a debate today breaks down along party lines. Each and every one of us as Americans should stand to defend this right, to protect and guarantee that every citizen, black, white, male, female, Democrat or Republican, has the opportunity to cast a vote.

As representatives we should not fear the will of the people; we should not fear a debate here on the floor of the House seeking to shed light on and improve our voting system, rather we must fear any threat to our right to vote. We must take seriously any allegation that would deprive any citizen of this right, let alone the serious and widespread allegations that are being made in Ohio.

The debate today is not about the election of George W. Bush, rather it is about the integrity and the future of our voting system. Today we are challenging ourselves to do better. We are challenging ourselves to examine our voting system, to get to the bottom of what went wrong in Ohio and around the Nation on Election Day. We need to hold hearings. We need to conduct an investigation and we need to pass legislation that puts in place specific federal protections for our federal elections, especially in the areas of auditing electronic voting machines and casting and counting provisional ballots. We must be willing to hold the same light on our election system that we hold on nations such as Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Iraq. How can we serve as a model for democracy, when our own citizens lack faith in our democracy?

That is what today is about, restoring faith in our system. This can not be accomplished by simply accepting the status quo and allowing opportunities such as today to pass without objection. The only way to change an injustice is to stand against it. Mr. Speaker, this is why I rise today. We must not accept the status quo, rather we must challenge ourselves to do better. This is what we do as Americans and this is what I am challenging us to do today.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, in the aftermath of the 2000 election, in which my congressional district witnessed the discarding of 27,000 votes, I am displeased to see that the Congress is here again today, 4 years later, continuing to confront many of the same problems we faced in the previous election. Many Members of Congress here to voice their own concerns, as well as echo those of citizens across the county, are engaging in floor debate to publicly enunciate their doubts and worries with respect to the veracity and/or fairness of the 2004 election. The goal of my colleagues is not so much to systematically overturn the 2004 election results, but rather, to bring about honest and open debate today to the House floor. Clearly, a formal challenge to the election's outcome could not change the results, but what it can do is to at least force both Chambers to engage in open debate and